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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA ERICA MILLER AND EUR/CE JAMIE LAMORE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [HU](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED: REALISM IN DEALING WITH THE
SARG

REF: SECSTATE 78880

Classified By: PolOff Ryan Leong for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Ref demarche was delivered on July 25, 2008, to Ambassador Laszlo Szabo of the Hungarian MFA Department for Africa and the Middle East. Szabo noted that Hungary was "not a pioneer" in reaching out to regimes like the Syrian Arab Republic Government (SARG) and that Hungary's foreign policy position is typically quite close to the United States and the EU. Szabo said that, like many EU members, Hungary would wait for cues from Paris on how to engage Syria following French President Nicolas Sarkozy's upcoming visit to Damascus. He noted that Syria's recent recognition of the sovereignty of Lebanon was a positive step. Furthermore, there were no bilateral political contacts, discussions, visits or dialogue between Hungary and Syria, and Szabo sees no reason for that to change anytime soon.

12. (C) Syria's diplomatic mission in Budapest was only at the Charge d'Affaires level, and Hungary's diplomatic mission in Damascus focused primarily on cultural exchanges. In the last year, the Syrian Charge has only visited the MFA twice; one visit merely to present his credentials. Szabo spoke authoritatively on Middle East matters, having previously served in Damascus for four years in the mid-1990s, fifteen years total overseas in Arab countries and he is the outbound Hungarian Ambassador to Qatar, due to arrive in late August 12008.
Foley